



# The ISC Newsletter

International Society of Cryptozoology

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## Editor

J. Richard Greenwell

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## FOLKLORE AND CRYPTOZOOLOGY SUBJECT OF JOINT CONFERENCE



*The University of Surrey, in Guildford, England, site of the Society's 9th Annual Membership Meeting held in July, 1990. The meeting was dedicated to a three-day conference, "Fabulous Beasts: Fact and Folklore," held jointly with Britain's Folklore Society. Cryptozoologists and folklorists had an opportunity to exchange many thoughts and ideas, and many new working relationships were established.*

The Society held its 9th Annual Membership Meeting in Guildford, Surrey, England, on July 20-22, 1990. The meeting was dedicated to a conference held jointly with Britain's Folklore Society, based at University College London, which covered many aspects of the interrelationships between folklore, zoology, and cryptozoology.

After an invitation from the Folklore Society to the International Society of Cryptozoology to hold a joint meeting --which the ISC Board accepted--the Secretaries of both Societies worked together to organize an interesting program, and the University of Surrey was selected as the host institution. The three-day Conference was titled: "Fabulous Beasts: Fact and Folklore," and included 20 presentations by speakers from six countries.

After registration and a dinner on the evening of Thursday, July 19th, the formal Conference began on the mor-

ning of Friday the 20th, with attendees being welcomed by Roy Vickery, Secretary of the Folklore Society. Dr. Vickery, of the British Museum (Natural History), emphasized how important such cross-disciplinary meetings can be, and he expressed satisfaction over how well the two Societies had been able to integrate their interests for such a conference. In his own welcoming remarks, ISC Secretary J. Richard Greenwell pointed out how he had grown up in the Surrey woods just a few miles south of Guildford, and the fact that the Conference was being held so close to his childhood home was of particular personal significance to him.

The first speaker was Aaron M. Bauer, a herpetologist at Villanova University in Philadelphia, who presented a paper co-authored with his colleague Anthony P. Russell, a University of Calgary herpetologist who was unable to attend the meeting (they

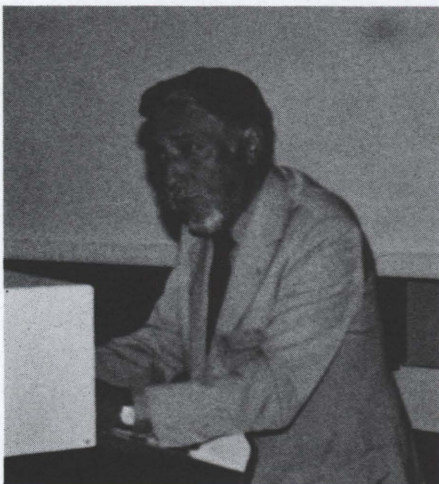


are co-discoverers of the giant gecko). Their paper, "The Connection Between Cryptozoology and Folklore: Case Histories from the Maori and Basotho Peoples," addressed how folkloric information may be "factual" or "cultural," and may have been transferred from a group's previous area of geographical occupation.

As examples, they discussed two cultural groups, the Maori of New Zealand and the Basotho of southern Africa, both of whom migrated to their present locations from remote ancestral homelands. Dr. Bauer emphasized how the zoological knowledge of such groups is a mixture derived from their current and former habitats, and their poor knowledge of animals in their new, adopted homelands may lead to false and often negative characteristics being attributed to certain species; such falsehoods may form part of a new folklore, making cryptozoological investigation more difficult.

The second speaker was ISC President Bernard Heuvelmans, from Paris, who talked on "The Metamorphosis of Unknown Animals into Fabulous Beasts, and of Fabulous Beasts into Known Animals." Dr. Heuvelmans, a mammalogist, first emphasized the very important role played by folklore in the cryptozoological process, and that it had always been his hope that folklorists would one day open the door to discussions with cryptozoologists. He regarded the Conference as a historical milestone in that respect, and expressed his great pleasure in being able to participate.

In his talk, Dr. Heuvelmans began by



ISC President Bernard Heuvelmans

emphasizing that, strictly speaking, the "unknown" animals of cryptozoology are really incompletely known animals, the blank spots being filled in by borrowing traits--sometimes fantastic and supernatural ones--from the mythic archetype they best seem to fit. The less humans know of such animals, the more mythicised they become, often ending up as "monsters." Upon scientific discovery, however, such animals are immediately stripped of all their fancy mythological attributes and receive the respectability of a recognized species. Thus, there are two contrasting transmogrifications which continually occur: from the unknown to the fabulous, and from the fabulous to the known.

The next speaker was William M.S. Russell, a sociologist at England's University of Reading, who discussed "Greek and Roman Monsters." Professor Russell, a former President of the Folklore Society, reviewed how folkloric monsters are constructed from real animals in three ways: enlargement, multiplication of parts, and composites of more than one species. A monster that does not conform to this pattern may therefore represent a real unknown animal species.

Professor Russell went on to discuss various ancient monsters which should not always be dismissed as fantasy, although the ancient tourist industry had a vested interest in convincing people of the literal truth of such monsters--including constructed fakes. He also showed illustrations of what appear to be long-necked seals--as proposed by Oudemans and Heuvelmans to explain lake monsters and sea serpents--on a now lost mosaic at Lydney Park dated from the 4th century A.D., and associated with the worship of the God Nodens.

David Heppell, curator of mollusca at the National Museums of Scotland--and an ISC Board member--was the next speaker. Mr. Heppell addressed the question: "Was Satan a Giant Squid?--Or the Pedigree of the Basilisk." The medieval Basilisk or Cockatrice was a fearsome monster, half chicken, half dragon, which could kill with its foul and fiery breath or, like Medusa, turn brave men into stone.

Reviewing Basilisk beliefs and what

kept such beliefs alive, Mr. Heppell traced connections between familiar elements: chicken, dragon, forked tail, and fatal gaze. He summarized his hypothesis that giant squid, which were probably beached on occasion, played a role in perpetuating the Satanic attributes of the Basilisk.

Isao S. Uemichi, of the Graduate School of Comparative Cultures at Japan's Aichi University, then talked on "Dragons and Serpents in Japan." He first reviewed the concept of Japanese dragons, on land, in marshes, and in the sea. Although there are snakes in Japan, none are large, so the concept of giant snakes is frequently indistinguishable from dragons. Serpents are often identified as female, and Dr. Uemichi reviewed several such folktales.

Although nobody actually sees any dragons, Dr. Uemichi discussed how they are very much a part of the daily conversation and the lives of the Japanese people, including their art. Dragons are thought to be merely "monster outgrowths" of serpents--one line of evidence for this folk belief being that they both hate iron. Traditional representations of dragons and serpents have recently been replaced by such modern monsters as Godzilla and Radon. It may be, Dr. Uemichi concluded sadly, that the dragon is already useless and worthless, if not entirely dead, in the Japanese imagination.

The next paper was by Claire Russell, of Reading, England, who was unable to attend the Conference due to illness, so it was read by her husband W.M.S. Russell (see above). Her paper, "The Dragon," discussed how this mythical Eastern and Western animal is an enlarged and modified snake. Culturally, the snake originally represented young males on the periphery of a matrilineal kinship group. With growing overpopulation and stress, the snake grows into an aggressive and male-dominated monster, the dragon. Protective militia become war bands or even armies. This is made explicit in the dragon standards of Iran, the later Roman Empire, and the dragon figure-heads of Viking warships.

While dragons may represent enemies from outside a society, they may also stand for patterns of stress from within,



such as human sacrifice. In more complex societies, they may still symbolize stressful behavior, such as that connected with political or financial pressures. The dragon, Mrs. Russell concluded, can serve all these symbolic purposes whatever its real animal origins may have been.

Michael Heaney, a scholar at Oxford University's Bodleian Library, gave the last paper of the day by addressing "Soviet Research into the Abominable Snowman and the Mythology of Cryptozoology." Mr. Heaney explained how, until fairly recently, it has been difficult for Westerners to assess the merits of Soviet "hominology" research. After initial official interest, research has been entirely unofficial, during which the late Boris Porshnev amassed a large body of reports. Mr. Heaney presented evidence indicating that, in his eagerness to uphold his surviving neanderthaloid theory, Porshnev was careless with his information--in two instances relying on fictional works to support his case. He concluded that Porshnev's evidence should not be taken at face value, and recourse must be had to his original sources for verification.

In the question/answer session, Dr. Heuvelmans defended Dr. Porshnev, making reference to the large body of evidence in support of the Soviet-Mongolian Almas (wildman). Mr. Heaney emphasized that his presentation did not undermine the case for the Almas; it merely served as a case study of how fictional information can make its way unchallenged into the cryptozoological literature, essentially assuming a modern folkloric role.

The program on the second day, Saturday, July 21, began with a paper by John Colarusso, a linguist at Canada's McMaster University, which discussed the topic "Linguistics and Cryptozoology." Unfortunately, at the last minute Dr. Colarusso was unable to attend the Conference, so his paper was presented by Dr. Bauer. Dr. Colarusso's paper outlined the methodology of linguistics pertinent to cryptozoology:

First, cited names for a putative animal should be examined to determine the actual forms used to designate it, which are determined by the reliabil-

ity of the citation, and by both phonological (sound) and morphological (word-formation) coherence within a grammatical system.

Such forms must then be analyzed both in terms of the grammar and the onomastics (use of proper names) of a language, both at present and earlier stages. Onomastic standards can often be determined through an examination of a culture's folklore. Finally, the sense of the resulting name must be scrutinized for possible zoological significance, and this should involve not only biological standards of plausibility, but also internal linguistic standards of coherence. Dr. Colarusso reviewed three examples in which he had applied such linguistic analyses: the New Zealand waitoreke, six Caucasian names for a reported wildman, and the North American sasquatch.

The next paper, "Large Bipedal Hominids as Reported by Spokane and Colville Indians," was given by Ed Fusch, from Riverside, Washington. He reviewed Sasquatch beliefs in two American Indian groups, based on his own fieldwork of 7 years. The legends and folklore of the Spokane and Colville Indians abound with stories of large bipedal hominids, with whom they reportedly interact and share a common habitat. Mr. Fusch presented numerous case studies based on his own records of interviews, and concluded that "large bipedal hominids existed, lived among, and interacted with the Indians from ancient days right up to very recent times."

Veronique Campion-Vincent, a rural sociologist with the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), in Paris, then spoke on "Mystery Cats in France." Her study covered 15 years of large felid incidents in France. Material evidence includes tracks and attacks on livestock, with the "beast" sometimes being captured or killed. The apparitions are both fantastic and real, rumor and fait divers. They are accompanied by accusations of deliberate or accidental releases, which are used as arguments in the competing strategies of the parties involved, such as militant ecologists, wildlife conservationists, and farmers.

For Dr. Campion-Vincent, however,



*Veronique Campion-Vincent*

the main appeal of the reports lies in the imaginary themes they invoke, as that is how such micro-events find resonance among the general public. She presented her interpretation of the collective excitement caused by such intrusions, linking the "apparitions" to the contradictory feelings held by the public towards new environmental policies, and, in particular, the reintroduction of wild predators such as lynxes and other negatively perceived animals into the French countryside.

The next speaker was Jeremy Harte, of the Bourne Hall Museum, in Ewell, Surrey, who spoke on "Real Dragons." His illustrated talk reviewed some interesting historical eyewitness accounts of dragons in different parts of medieval Britain, particularly those emanating from marshes and bodies of water.

Adrienne Mayor, a classicist from Princeton, New Jersey, was next with a paper entitled "The Origin of the Griffin." Scholars have usually described the Griffin, a four-legged predator with an eagle-like beak, as an imaginary creature symbolizing vigilance. It was first spoken of in 675 B.C. by a Greek who traveled to the foot of the Altai Mountains in Mongolia. In classical tradition, the Griffin was associated with nomadic horsemen who mined gold, and was said to lay eggs to protect its young.

Mrs. Mayor presented the results of her cross-disciplinary research, studying Greek and Roman art and literature from 700 B.C. to 300 A.D., as well as modern archaeology, paleontology, and mineralogy. She proposed that the Griffin legend derived from observations of fossils of the late Cretaceous dinosaur Protoceratops, whose skull and





Adrienne Mayor

postcranial bones display the physical attributes of the Griffin. Such fossils, along with nests of fossilized eggs, are extensive in the Altai region of Mongolia, where gold has been mined since the Bronze Age.

Caroline Oates, of the Folklore Society's Library at University College London, then gave an illustrated talk with the intriguing title of "Werewolves, Raw and Cooked: Taxonomy and Evolution of a Mythical Hybrid." Miss Oates reviewed the cultural evolution of the werewolf in France, analyzing how various animals thought to be responsible for the werewolf myth merged into a single form.

The last speaker of the day was Barbara Fass Leavy, of the English Department of Queen's College of the City University of New York, in Flushing. Her paper, "Animal Mates and Frog Princesses," had three thrusts. The first presented the animal mate in folkloric tales as a variety of the wild man or woman. The second surveyed various approaches to animal groom tales, including a critique of psychiatrist Bruno Bettelheim's theory of females learning to undo a sex repression. Dr. Leavy, instead, argued that, in many folktales, the woman has too great a fondness for an animal, indicating increased, not decreased, sexual repression.

Her third point was that Bettelheim had erroneously stated that animal brides in folklore represent more attractive and charming beasts, such as swans. Furthermore, analyses of such stories reveals significant gender-related

themes. For example, in many variations in which a man must kiss a female frog in order to disenchant her, he is typically unable to muster the courage to do so; it is usually the female character who must perform the super-human tasks--even when the benefits accrue to the man. Dr. Leavy concluded that pervasive and frequently negative attitudes towards women's roles in nature are found in such folktales, and they have yet to receive the attention they warrant.

The program on the third day, Sunday July 22, began with a paper by Jean-Paul Debenat, of the Department of Communication of the University of Nantes Institute of Technology, in France, who spoke on "Fabulous Beasts of Our Times." Mr. Debenat stated that, when a highly symbolic status has been conferred on an animal, it has not occurred haphazardly, but has followed a definite pattern, and that during certain historical periods, the symbolic status of certain animals reached its climax. He proposed that an individual bestiary may enlighten one at a personal, intimate level, and a collective bestiary operates at a societal level.

Mr. Debenat's conclusion was that the fabulous components of today's bestiary are scattered throughout fictional literature, motion pictures, and cryptozoological works. A precise almanac could be compiled from cryptozoological findings, appearing as an innovation in the domain of "biomythology," provided it abided by precise rules, as in the case of biology.

The next presentation was by J.B. Smith, of the School of Modern Languages and International Studies at England's University of Bath, who spoke on "Swallows, Amazons and Basilisks: Thoughts on the Ancestry of Ransome's Nibthwaite Serpent." Dr. Smith discussed the 1930's children's stories written by Arthur Ransome (1884-1967)--such as Swallows and Amazons and Swallowdale--focusing on an account of a "serpent" kept by woodcolliers in a box in their hut, presumably as a kind of talisman. This is reminiscent of the spiritus of Scandinavian belief--a snake, insect, or strange creature--said to be hatched from the egg of a cock (rooster) and reputed to bring good fortune.

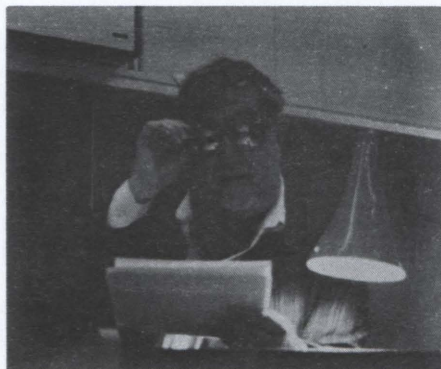
Such beliefs were common in continental Europe in the 19th century and earlier, and probably represented a synthesis between medieval Cockatrice lore and stories of bottled spirits. The Cockatrice entered both Continental and English popular traditions, but the English traditions generally show no sign of fusion with the idea of the bottle imp, which is ultimately oriental in origin. For the folklorist, Ransome's account represents a "bridge" between English and Continental tradition, while for the cryptozoologist it exemplifies the metamorphosis of a fabulous beast, the Basilisk or Cockatrice, into a known animal, in this case the European adder, Vipera berus.

This was followed by a paper titled "The Horned Hare: Fact, Fiction, or Philosophy?" by David Heppell (see above) and British naturalist Peter Dance. Mr. Dance was unable to attend the meeting, so the presentation was made by Mr. Heppell alone. The horned hare, Lepus cornutus, was a species recorded by 18th century zoologists, but it was always considered a great rarity. Early trophy heads were greatly valued, and many travelers sought them out. Pallas reportedly shot one in Azerbaijan, but Linnaeus was doubtful of their existence.

While fakery has no doubt been involved, Heppell and Dance have attempted to trace the origin of the belief in the horned hare. Such beliefs are reflected in folktales across the world, from Africa to Europe and to the North American Indians. In his illustrated presentation, Mr. Heppell showed how they have been able to trace a recognizable path from the first known discussions of horned hares in the 3rd century, via Persian cosmographers and Rabellais, to the elusive Wolpertinger of Bavaria and to the familiar Jackalope of Wyoming.

The last paper of the Conference was given by folklorist Jan-Ojvind Swahn, who serves on the faculty of both the University of Lund, in Sweden, and the University of Abo (Turku), in Finland, and was titled "The Great Lake Monster of Sweden Discussed by a Folklorist." Professor Swahn reviewed the history of central Sweden's Lake Storsjon Monster, beginning with 19th century attempts to catch it, and comparing and





Jan-Ojvind Swahn

contrasting such evidence with the much richer traditions of Norway (Jamtland county, in which Lake Storsjon is located, was part of Norway until the mid-17th century).

Most Swedish monster lore centers around giant terrestrial snakes and wyverns, and there is a very clear distinction between the sea monster lore of western Scandinavia and the tradition of the "land dragon" encountered in eastern and southern Scandinavia. Professor Swahn pointed out that the Norwegian aquatic monster tradition seems to be older than its counterparts in Jamtland and Bohuslan (another former Norwegian province), and has analogies in Scottish and Irish lake monsters. This is one of many "North Sea traditions" that link western Scandinavian folklore with that of the Scots and the Irish, a cultural bond that embraces folktales, ballads, legends, and popular beliefs.

The Conference also benefited from two other talks, one by Phil Underwood, of Camberley, England, who gave an interesting illustrated presentation on "The Morris Beast" on the evening of Friday the 20th. His talk centered around the traditional and colorful use of hobby horses which accompany dancing teams in the English Morris dance, and the animals they depict.

The other presentation, by Bernie Mace of Rare Fauna Research, near Melbourne, Australia, discussed his group's fieldwork investigating reports of living thylacines on mainland Australia, as well as reports of what appear to be American pumas. Although not in the printed program, and not really a part of the folklore-cryptozoology interface--being strictly

cryptozoological in nature--Mr. Mace's presentation was nevertheless worked into the program in two parts, and was of interest to all.

The Secretaries of both Societies wound up the Conference with some concluding remarks. Dr. Vickery stressed the importance of societies and conferences that bring together people from different disciplines. He emphasized how useful the mutual exchange of thoughts and ideas had been at the meeting, both in the lecture hall during the question/answer sessions, and also behind the scenes in personal interactions.

Indeed, some had predicted that the two distinct groups at the Conference--the folklorists and the cryptozoologists--would essentially keep to themselves. However, it turned out that they had much to learn from each other, and the numerous social events over several days provided ample opportunity for participants to establish new relationships and friendships--despite the discomfort of one of the most intense heat waves ever recorded in Britain! Dr. Vickery felt that the Conference had been a resounding success, and he hoped that it would be only the beginning of such interdisciplinary links between members of both Societies.

## BRUCE DAVIS FEARED DEAD

The Secretariat regrets to announce that ISC Florida member Bruce Davis, his wife Caroline, and their 3-year-old daughter are feared dead following their disappearance in October, 1989. Their disappearance occurred while on a family vacation near Cedar Key, on the Gulf of Mexico.

Mr. Davis has been an active investigator of Skunk Ape (Sasquatch) reports in Florida for a number of years. He summarized his findings in a presentation at the Society's 1989 Sasquatch symposium held at Washington State University, in Pullman, June 24-25, 1989 (see Newsletter, Winter, 1989, p. 2).

Cedar Key park authorities first found

In his own concluding remarks, Mr. Greenwell also expressed satisfaction over the intellectual exchanges which had taken place at the Conference. In a philosophical roundup, he pointed out that, despite many assumptions to the contrary, human beings actually know very little about themselves and their environment in both space and time. Invoking Descartes, he stated that there is no absolute proof for anything at all, and he emphasized that the sort of interactions between cryptozoologists, who tend to use materialistic tools, and folklorists, who tend to use symbolic tools, can only help advance our understanding of reality. In the broader sense, he concluded, it will not matter much who was right about what; what will matter is that humans had at least tried to better understand themselves and their environs.

In some ways, the Conference was the most successful meeting that the Society has yet sponsored or co-sponsored. It was certainly the longest and the most complex, and our thanks must go to Folklore Society members--particularly to Dr. Vickery--for their cooperation and support. Several of the speakers are preparing manuscripts based on their Conference presentations, and these will eventually be submitted to the journals of both Societies--Folklore and Cryptozoology--for possible publication.

the Davis' abandoned car, and a subsequent search found their fishing canoe on a beach 12 miles further south. Other belongings were later found even further south. All three are presumed dead, but no bodies have been recovered. □

## LATE PUBLICATIONS

This Autumn, 1990, newsletter will be appearing 6 months late due to financial difficulties within the Society. However, the final (Winter) newsletter for 1990 is also in production, and will be mailed in May, 1991. The 1990 journal (Vol. 9) is likewise in production, but will not appear until about July, 1991.

These late publications will be mailed automatically to all 1990 members, and renewals for 1991 need not be made until that time. We regret any confusion or inconvenience caused. □



## YEMEN MONITOR DESCRIBED

The new monitor lizard discovered in Yemen (Newsletter, Winter 1989) has been officially named and described as a new species in a Saudi Arabian journal by its discoverers, ISC member Wolfgang Bohme and Ulrich Joger from Germany and Beat Schatti from Switzerland. The 4-foot (1.2m) long reptile has been named Varanus yemenensis. Monitor lizards, technically known as varanids, are the largest lizards in the world, and include the famous 10-foot (3m) Komodo dragon.

The discovery of this new species represents one of the most dramatic and colorful herpetological sleuth jobs of the 1980's. Dr. Bohme, at the Alexander Koenig Zoological Research Institute and Museum in Bonn, first noticed the monitor in 1985 while watching a popular documentary television program on Yemen. He immediately realized that it must be a new form, and the search for living specimens began. The first search, in 1986, ended in failure, but the second, headed by Dr. Schatti, at the Zoological Museum in Zurich, was successful. Eight specimens were

obtained, six of which became residents of the Zurich Zoo in an attempt to establish a breeding colony.

In their published paper ("A New Monitor Lizard [Reptilia: Varanidae] from Yemen, with Notes on Ecology, Phylogeny and Zoogeography," Fauna of Saudi Arabia, Vol 10:433-448, 1989), Dr. Bohme and his colleagues address several hypotheses. One is that the monitor from Yemen--from where no monitors had previously been reported --might be taxonomically identical with the African savannah monitor (Varanus exanthematicus) on the opposite bank of the Red Sea. Another hypothesis was that it was a subspecies of that monitor, and a third hypothesis--the most likely --was that it was, in fact, a distinct new species.

To determine the reptile's systematic position, the investigators undertook careful comparative studies of its external and hemipenial morphology. They also conducted comparative biochemical analyses: electrophoresis and precipitin (immunological response)

tests. These showed an evolutionary closeness between the Yemen monitor and Varanus albigularis from southern Africa, with a genetic divergence between one and two million years ago. An early Pleistocene land bridge between Yemen and the African mainland supports such an evolutionary relationship.

The authors conclude that "the morphological, hemipenial and biochemical data presented here confirm the hypothesis that V. yemenensis n. sp. is specifically distinct from its closest relative in East and South Africa, V. albigularis."

So, another medium-sized land vertebrate discovered in the 1980's has formally joined the ranks of the known fauna of our planet. In the meantime, more information has been made available concerning its range. While only a couple of locations were initially known, Dr. Bohme and his colleagues have now identified about a dozen locations, mainly in the foothills of the south-western Arabian mountain range. It is now thought to be "relatively common" there--a fortunate dowry for a "new" animal. □

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Zhou Guoxing is an ISC Board member, one of the few I had not met--until November of 1989. I was in China with Frank Poirier to examine the evidence for the Yeren, or Wildman (see details in the Spring, 1990, newsletter, and Vol. 8 [1989] of the journal), and I finally had my chance to meet him.

Professor Zhou is in the Department of Anthropology at the Beijing Natural History Museum, and he also serves as its Deputy Director. He has a cramped office, but one thing I noticed about Chinese academics is how they are able to store vast amounts of materials and information in limited space. We spent several hours discussing the Wildman question. I found Professor Zhou is not as supportive of the Wildman's existence as I had expected. But he is certainly very objective, and I think we were in agreement on most points.

The main Museum building is an

impressive stone structure. Somehow, one can tell at a distance that it is a natural history museum. And a closer inspection reveals bullet marks on the edifice walls--evidence of the tragic 1989 crackdown on dissenting students. Zhou gave me a complete tour of the Museum. It has fish, bird, and mammal sections, and a magnificent dinosaur hall. But the showpiece he was most proud of is his own creation, a new exhibit on human evolution. It was extremely well done, as professional as one might find in a good European or North American museum.

I happened to know that the exhibit, which had been 5 years in the making, had been very controversial, and its scheduled opening in 1988 had been delayed for some time by the authorities. For one thing, Zhou had failed to include a quote by Engels linking Marxism to social development. Also, the exhibit included a photo of a nude man and woman embracing, as well as

plastic models of the human reproductive organs. But Zhou would not budge, and in the end he got his way; the exhibit--which takes up an entire ground-floor wing of the building --finally opened to the public. And it is without doubt the most educational public exhibit on human evolution ever put together in China.

Zhou has allocated a little space to the Wildman in one of the exhibit rooms. It included some footprint casts, and--the most impressive--an enormous ceramic head of Gigantopithecus, thought by many to be the most likely candidate for both the Yeren and North American Sasquatch. This head is based on a skull reconstruction by American anthropologist--and ISC Board member --Grover Krantz (see his article in Vol. 6, 1987, of the journal). How curious, I thought: this is what would be controversial in an American museum--not the nude depictions!

A remarkable coincidence occurred while I was in Beijing. Zhou told me that Nikolai Spassov, ISC's Bulgarian



Board member, was also in the city, doing research at the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology--where I had been just the day before. We were able to get him on the phone, and the next day the three of us met at the Museum and discussed cryptozoology--and the Wildman--at length.

Nikolai Spassov, a mammalogist at Bulgaria's National Museum of Natural History, is a tall, pensive man, with a charming personality. We hit it off right away, and that evening, over drinks and dinner at my hotel, we discussed many other unresolved cryptozoological problems around the world.

I also took the opportunity to ask him what he thought of the fall of the Bulgarian government, which I had heard about earlier that day. This was a time of rapid political change in Eastern Europe, and while we were in China it seemed that another East European regime was falling every few days. Spassov expressed astonishment, saying that I must have been mistaken; other East European regimes would fall, he said, but not the Bulgarian one. That regime had been in power since he was 3 years old! We went to the hotel shop,



From left, Zhou Guoxing, Nikolai Spassov, and Richard Greenwell cutting across geographical, political, and ideological barriers.

and the International Herald Tribune confirmed the event on the front page. Nikolai just sat there for 10 minutes, reading it and mumbling: "I just can't believe it. I just can't believe it."

So, I was able to meet two more ISC Board members. Both Zhou and Spassov are very supportive of the Society, although, due to political and financial reasons, they have not been as

active as they would like. But the Society has been able to cut across geographical, political, and ideological barriers, as a good society should always do. That is why we are represented in 34 countries and on all continents except Antarctica.

J. Richard Greenwell  
Editor

## FIELDWORK FAILS TO FERRET OUT MYSTERIOUS MUSTELID

In late 1988, Canadian park and wildlife officials began an intensive investigation of reported sightings of black-footed ferrets, Mustela nigripes, in the Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta. Supposed sightings of this species, one of the rarest mammals in the world, had actually been reported since 1983, but a recent increase in claimed sightings precipitated the investigation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologists with experience in locating black-footed ferrets were invited to participate.

The black-footed ferret has always held surprises. Once common throughout the Western plains, its numbers declined dramatically as the 20th century progressed and populations of prairie dogs--its main prey-- decreased. By mid-century, many thought the species extinct, despite continued

sighting reports. However, in 1964, a population was discovered in South Dakota, and it was studied for several years. A captive breeding program failed, and when that population--the only one known--died out, the species was once again thought extinct. Occasional reports were made by "untrained" laypersons, but "confirmed" sightings ceased.

However, history was to dramatically repeat itself. Tim Clark, a zoologist at Idaho State University, was convinced of its continued survival. He spent 8 years searching for ferret evidence in the field. He distributed posters offering a \$50 reward for ferret information, and he followed up every lead he could. But no ferrets materialized.

In September of 1981, Clark's luck changed. A specimen was killed by a

ranch dog in Wyoming, and a local taxidermist realized what it was. Soon afterwards, a cowboy spotted a live one. Clark's search intensified that winter, and he and his associates covered more than 7,000 acres of prairie dog towns, walking 2,500 miles, and inspecting about 111,000 prairie dog holes--a favorite abode of ferrets. They also tracked ferret footprints in the snow from dawn to dusk, and swept ranges with aircraft floodlights at night to try to catch the animal's eye reflections. All proved to be in vain, although they did produce evidence of 22 ferrets by snow-tracking.

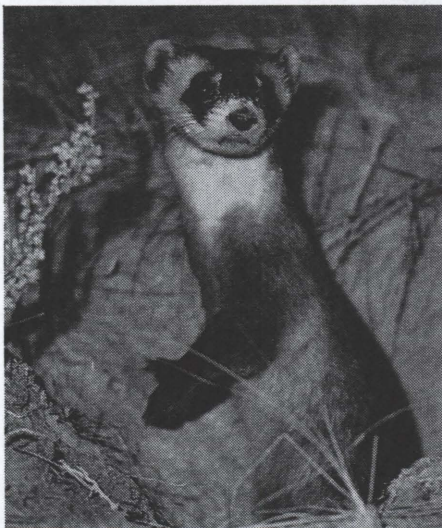
Finally, at 2 a.m. on June 28, 1982, Clark and his team spotted a black-footed ferret mother carrying three kits from one burrow to another. It had been very hard to locate a population, but once this was done, determining the



size of the population was an easier job. By the end of the summer, 12 litters had been located, with at least 38 individuals known to exist. By 1983, Clark reported that 75 ferrets had been counted, with 50 born that year.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rapidly initiated a recovery plan, and a Black-Footed Ferret Interstate Coordinating Committee was set up with 12 U.S. states and two Canadian provinces. The plan involved live trapping of all the known wild ferrets, captive breeding, and eventual reintroduction into the wild. Trapping the known specimens ended by 1987, and successful breeding in 1988 produced 34 kits at the Sybille Wildlife Research and Conservation Education Unit, near Wheatland, Wyoming. To increase genetic variability, attempts were made to locate new wild populations, but, despite continued eyewitness reports, rewards of \$10,000 for a clear photo or solid information went uncollected. One submitted photo proved to be 20 years old!

By late 1988, unable to find new wild populations, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, concerned that a catastrophe--such as a fire or disease--could eradicate the only captive population, decided to split the breeding colony into three. After extensive consultations, two institutions, the National Zoological Park's Conservation and Research Center at Front Royal, Virginia, and the Henry Doorly Zoo, in Omaha, Nebras-



*The black-footed ferret. Will it surprise us once more? (LuRay Parker, Wyoming Game and Fish Department).*

ka, were selected for participation in the breeding program. Each received 10 breeding pairs. (With Defense Department approval, the precious cargo for Virginia was airlifted by a C-130 cargo aircraft.) The hope is to increase the total captive population to 500 individuals before 1992, thus permitting wild reintroduction.

Despite its precarious survival in the USA, the species has been thought extinct in Canada since 1937, and was so officially listed in 1986 by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife, a joint federal-provincial body. As all the known black-footed ferrets in the USA are now in captivity, this effectively implies that there are no wild individuals left at all.

One Canadian naturalist, Richard Laing, disagrees with that finding. Laing, who teaches environmental science at Lethbridge Community College, in Alberta, accepts the continued sighting reports, which have come from near Medicine Hat, Waterton Lakes National Park, Bow Island (northwest of Red-cliff), and Tillebrook Provincial Park in the southeastern part of the province. Indeed, some of the Waterton sightings had been reported by no less than the former acting superintendent of the Park, and the Park's chief naturalist. Laing also believes that there is evidence for other cryptic populations in Saskatchewan and in the northern part of the U.S. state of Montana.

The initial results of the new Canadian field surveys seemed promising, revealing "some possible evidence of ferrets, but no sightings have been confirmed." Could the reports be attributed to sightings of released or escaped pet ferrets? U.S. Fish and Wildlife ferret expert Lou Hanebury thought not: "In a climate such as Waterton Lakes, I don't believe the domestic ferret could have established a reproducing population that persisted since 1983," he said.

The Canadian fieldwork continued for 8 months, through the 1988-89 winter, but by spring, 1989, not a single ferret had been caught, photographed, or even seen. Park officials and volunteers, including Lou Hanebury, had trekked 1,800 hectares of foothills grassland, where it was suspected the ferrets might be feeding on ground squirrels. Al-

though some volunteers were still pursuing fieldwork by April, the search was officially discontinued.

The implications of the failure are that a) the species is extinct in Canada--and may have been for decades--or (more likely) b) that the species survives cryptically, its presence being very difficult to establish--a fact already known to Tim Clark, who spent 8 years searching for it. The animal the Canadian searchers were trying to locate is solitary, subterranean, and nocturnal. It also possesses very acute senses of hearing, smell, and sight. Furthermore, tracking conditions that winter were particularly poor due to strong chinooks that swept away fresh tracks almost as soon as they were deposited.

While successful reintroductions are now probable due to the success of the captive breeding program, the question of the black-footed ferret's continued, cryptic survival in the wild remains unresolved. But this mysterious mustelid has surprised many others in the past, and despite its current Canadian status of "extinct," it may well return to surprise us once more. □

## TRANSLATORS NEEDED

The Secretariat is seeking members with a working knowledge of French or German who have the time and interest to do translation work. There is occasional need of English translations of French and German newspaper and magazine articles, and sometimes scholarly articles. Although such texts are usually not highly technical, a familiarity with zoological principles and terminology would be helpful.

Unfortunately, the Society is in no financial position to pay for such services, which would have to be performed as a labor of love. However, as a recompense, the Secretariat can offer free back issues of the newsletter or journal, or deductions from future membership payments.

Those interested should contact the Secretary as soon as possible. □



## 1991 MEETING PROGRAM

The Society's Tenth Annual Membership Meeting has been scheduled for Saturday, April 20, 1991, at Texas A. & M. University at Galveston, hosted by Bernd Wursig, in the Department of Marine Biology. Dr. Wursig, a member of the Editorial Board of *Cryptozoology*, is director of Texas A. & M.'s Marine Mammal Research Program.

A Social Hour will be held at 9 a.m. for ISC members and their guests only in Room 103/105 of the CLB Building, and the regular meeting, which will be open to the public, will commence in the CLB Building Auditorium at 10 a.m.

The program will include the following talks:

- \* Bernd Wursig, "Cryptozoology: A Scientific Paradigm of an Age-Old Problem."
- \* Roy P. Mackal, Vice President, ISC, "Flying Reptiles in Namibia? Report of an Expedition."

- \* J. Richard Greenwell, Secretary, ISC, "Investigating the Wildman in China."
- \* John S. Buckley, Texas Memorial Museum, University of Texas, Austin, "Nessie: An Endothermic Plesiosaur?"
- \* Vaughan A. Langman, Department of Biological Sciences, Louisiana State University, Shreveport, "Mokele-Mbembe: Implications of Cow-Calf Relationships for the Physiology of Living Dinosaurs."
- \* William E. Evans, Dean, Maritime College, Texas A. & M. University, and President, Texas Institute of Oceanography, "The Giant Oriental Salamander Andreas: Did a Miocene Form Persist into Historical Times?"

- \* Forrest G. Wood, Bio-sciences Department, U.S. Naval Oceans Systems Center, San Diego, will make a special presentation of an early 1950's archival film "The Return of the Creature."

The Society is not making meal or hotel arrangements. Members needing hotel accommodations must make their own bookings. The meeting is open to both ISC members and the public at no charge as an educational function.

This will be the Society's first meeting in the southern U.S.A. The Society has fewer members in the South, but it was decided to hold a meeting there as part of a continuing policy of making such meetings accessible to as many members as possible. All ISC members in Texas--and the South--are urged to attend.

*(Because of the delay in publication of this newsletter, it is probable that the above information will not reach the general membership in time. However, a copy of the program has been mailed to all members in the southern U.S.A. and others who have requested it.)* □

## CRYPTOLETTERS

*The Editor welcomes letters from readers on any topic related to cryptozoology, but reserves the right to shorten them or make slight changes to improve style and clarity, but not meaning.*

To the Editor:

A recent lead article was devoted to a thorough review of the evidence for the continued existence of the Eastern cougar or puma (*Newsletter*, Autumn, 1989). It was a well-written documentary, and it presented a solid data base from which other studies should evolve.

There was one segment of the article that particularly caught my attention, that being the relatively high percentage of "black panther" reports. From the article, it appears that no acceptable conclusions have been reached concerning these supposed melanistic pumas. I would like to add something to this point that might prove fruitful upon

further investigation.

As an ecologist with considerable experience with field studies involving numerous species of wildlife, I have traveled extensively throughout the continent--in particular the northeastern U.S.A. When I read in your article about the reports of black pumas, I was not surprised. Here is why. The northeastern USA has a number of mammal species that contain many black specimens. For example, black specimens are a color variation in the Eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), and litters containing both color phases are common. Historical records indicate that the northeastern USA had a higher percentage of blacks than grays before the forests were logged in the 1800's.

Another mammal species that contains black specimens is the river otter (*Lutra canadensis*). When as a graduate student in Pennsylvania I was working on a river otter project, coal-black specimens were more common than

not, the normal color phase being light brown to chocolate. I am unaware of black river otters reported from anywhere else on the North American continent. The black bear (*Ursus americanus*) is still another example. Throughout the Northeast, it is truly black. In the Western states, black bears come in a variety of colors, and the brown (cinnamon) phase can be the most common. In some areas of Arizona, black bears are nearly always brown. Yet, throughout the Northeast, this species is virtually always black.

Some of this unique "blackness," particularly with bears, has been attributed to sunlight, or the lack thereof. For example, in the West, habitats are much more open than in the Northeast, which is almost completely forest covered. Thus, the Western bears receive considerably more solar radiation, which is believed to bleach their coats. This may also hold true for otters. The Pennsylvania habitat of the black otters is largely forest-covered mountain streams and thick



rhododendron swamps, where relatively little direct sunlight reaches the animals. However, Mississippi Delta otters, which are brown, spend more time in open, sunlit marshes.

This theory could also hold true for the gray squirrel. Although the black phase of this species is still common in some areas of the Northeast, it is still not as prevalent as historical records indicate for the once large expanses of climax forest. It is possible that today's younger growth forests permit more light penetration than did the older climax forests.

Black pumas may not exist in the West for this very reason--too much solar radiation. This is also true of lions on the East African plains. Yet, black leopards do occasionally occur. Why? Because this species spends much of its time in dense forest habitat with little sunlight penetration.

If the true Eastern puma does exist, I would not be surprised if black specimens did occasionally occur within the population. Although it is possible that diet and genetics may also play a role, the amount of solar radiation that reaches the animal may play a larger part in determining adult color phases.

Thomas E. Eveland  
Minisink Hills, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

*The high proportion of Eastern puma reports describing black specimens--37 percent--has tended to muddy the whole question of the survival of this subspecies. Bruce Wright struggled with this problem for years. Those who have enough trouble with the idea of ordinary-colored pumas surviving in the East use the argument that, if there really are so many Eastern black pumas, why are there no Western black pumas? However, according to Dr. Eveland's careful reasoning, we should expect black pumas in the East, but not in the West. So, instead of discrediting the Eastern puma survival proposition, black puma reports actually support it.--Editor*

To the Editor:

I always follow the Zoological Record and Biological Abstracts for published scientific descriptions of new animal species, and I was taken completely by

surprise when I read your long list of unusual zoological discoveries in the 1980's in a recent editorial (Message from the Editor, Newsletter, Winter, 1989). I had never before heard of some of the animals you mentioned.

The following is my own list of eight large mammal species which have been scientifically described since the Society was founded--that is, within the past eight years--but which you did not include in your list. By "large," I mean that they are at least the size of a domestic cat. I have only included smaller new species if they are very unusual.

1. A rock wallaby, Petrogale persephone, from northern Queensland, Australia, described in 1982.
2. A cusimanse (mongoose), Crossarchus platycephalus, from southern Nigeria /Cameroon, described in 1984.
3. A gazelle, Gazella biltis, from Yemen, described in 1985.
4. A squirrel monkey, Saimiri manzolinii, from Brazil, described in 1985.
5. A mongoose, Gallidictis grandidienses, from Madagascar, described in 1986.
6. A guenon monkey, Cercopithecus solaris, from Gabon, described in 1988.
7. A dasyurid ("native cat"), Dasyurus spartacus, from New Guinea, described in 1988.
8. A tamarin monkey, Leontopithecus caissara, from Brazil, described in 1990.

These eight mammal species which you did not include in your editorial are, in my opinion, noteworthy enough to be called unusual discoveries. The ones in your editorial which were new to me were: the black tree kangaroo

from New Guinea, the pygmy elephant of Central Africa (which you have since featured in the Spring, 1990, Newsletter), the Chinese muntjak deer, and the wild cat from Tsushima Island.

I would appreciate your comments, suggestions, and criticisms of my above listing of newly discovered species.

Stephen F. Kredel  
Greensburg, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

*I thank Mr. Kredel for his list of recent mammal descriptions. These animals certainly warrant inclusion on any list of new discoveries. Concerning my own listing of 20 1980's discoveries, it was not really intended to be comprehensive; I simply compiled a list of what I considered to be the most interesting finds based on information that was immediately available to me at the time, but without doing a comprehensive literature search. In fact, soon after its publication, I realized that I had failed to include an important one which had been known to me: the 1986 rediscovery of the Sumatran rhino in Borneo.*

*There are two major differences between Mr. Kredel's list and my own, apart from the fact that he has limited himself to mammals. First, mine included discoveries of new species which had not yet been scientifically named and described in the zoological literature. Second, it included rediscoveries of known species thought extinct--or at least thought extinct in certain geographical regions. Thus, in these instances, there would be no subsequent namings and descriptions of new species.*

*Finally, there is the question of whether a species discovery is, in fact, cryptozoological, or merely zoological (based on parameters already discussed extensively in the Society's journal, Cryptozoology). In my own listing, some of the examples are cryptozoological, and some are only zoological. One may then ask: Why include them if they were not cryptozoological? The criteria I used--and probably the one followed by Mr. Kredel as well--included non-cryptozoological discoveries and rediscoveries if they served as impressive examples of the sort of medium-to-large animals which have continued to elude zoologists in the late 20th century.*



*A number of members have requested further details concerning these 1980's discoveries and rediscoveries. Thus, I am preparing a more comprehensive review, including in many cases, the circumstances of the finds. This will appear in a forthcoming newsletter. Readers who are aware of other interesting 1980's discoveries or rediscoveries not listed by myself or Mr. Kredel are invited to send the information to the Secretariat. Copies of the pertinent literature--or at least complete references--would be appreciated.-- Editor*

To the Editor:

Concerning Richard Weil's query on the Roman "bear" from East Africa, and Bernard Heuvelmans' comment (Newsletter, Spring, 1990), I would like to add my own commentary.

The Romans never made any effort to push the Empire's boundaries into subsaharan Africa. However, a trapping station is something else again. Only a handful of people--or even only one--would have to have been Roman citizens. Or, for that matter, local natives could themselves have trapped the beasts for the Romans. As the native people would have had little else to offer in trade, the ravenous Roman appetite for wild animals may have been seen as a godsend.

That might account for any Roman cultural material as far south as Kenya. The trappers may have been local natives using the Roman gear. The Romans generally frowned on trading arms or armor to "barbarians," but private citizens may have arranged secret deals--many games were, in fact, sponsored by politicians running for office. Since the games were so vital in keeping the Roman mob pacified, central government officials may even

have looked the other way, deeming that a steady supply of animals was more important. Perhaps the Nandi Bear reached Rome in that way.

Incidentally, the only place I have ever read of a lost Roman legion in Africa was in a Tarzan novel, Tarzan and the Lost Empire. I do not know from where Edgar Rice Burroughs got the idea for this book.

Gregory W. Detwiler  
Williamsburg, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

To the Editor:

While doing some research on South American mythology, I came across several references in older texts to a ferocious cat known as the Warracaba Tiger (one source was Among the Indians of Guiana, by Everard im Thurn, published in 1883). "Tiger" is sometimes used as a generic name for any large South American cat.

Found in British Guiana (now Guyana), this felid was named after the warracaba bird, a trumpeter (Psophia), for any of three reasons: 1) the cat had a cry like the trumpeter; 2) the cat's color was that of the trumpeter's purplish breast feathers; or 3) the cat's favorite prey was the trumpeter. Whatever the reasons, the Indians of the region feared it. They said it wasn't afraid of fire, but it hated water--and dogs. One of its most interesting reported characteristics was that it hunted in packs.

I have never seen any mention of this cat in any modern cryptozoological literature. Has it already been debunked as a fantastic tale, or has it just gone unnoticed? I would like to know if others have any information on this supposed South American felid.

Chad Arment  
Lititz, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

*This is indeed a relatively obscure cryptid, but discussion of it has appeared from time to time in this century. The most recent review is by Karl P.N. Shuker in this 1989 book, Mystery Cats of the World: From Blue Tigers to Exmoor Beasts, published in Britain by Robert Hale (£12.95). This book will be included in a cryptozoology bibliography now in preparation for the Newsletter, and it will also be reviewed more extensively in the journal Cryptozoology.--Editor*

To the Editor:

While crossing the Western Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico recently, I had a conversation with a local resident who reported that, in a nearby area, two desiccated human skeletons had been found in a mountain cave. What was unusual was that the skeletons were said to be very large, and had traces of blond hair. The locals have apparently left the place alone, and are somewhat afraid of returning there.

This report came to me from a small Mexican village. The surrounding area, for the most part, is populated by the Turahumara Indians, many of whom still live in caves, but they are of short stature.

Since then, I have heard of other reports of "blond" Indians of larger size, and I may return to investigate the cave someday. Meanwhile, although this is probably not related to cryptozoology, I would be interested in hearing from others who may know about "blond Indians" in Mexico. I may be contacted at: 13501 Puget Sound Blvd., Edmonds, Washington 98026.

Frederick R. "Sandy" Sandborg  
Edmonds, Washington, U.S.A.

The ISC Newsletter is not issued for permanent scientific record, and thus, for the purposes of zoological nomenclature, does not fulfill the criteria for publication as defined in the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

Archival Material: Members are urged to send to the ISC Secretariat copies of cryptozoology-related newspaper reports, popular magazine articles, and scientific papers. Recently published material is particularly welcome, but old and obscure items are also of interest. It is better for the Secretariat to have two or three copies of an article than none at all; so, when in doubt, send. All submissions should clearly indicate a full reference; e.g. name of publication, date, and--in the case of scientific papers--volume and page numbers. In most cases, because of the volume of mail, members will not receive an acknowledgment of receipt, but all items submitted are carefully read, are often used in the Newsletter, and are preserved for posterity.



# WOOD'S ANIMAL FACTS

The largest marine bird is the emperor penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*), which breeds on sea ice and islets off the coast of Antarctica. Adults stand up to 4 feet (1.2m) tall and are massively built. In one series of 33 adult birds, weighed in November when they were fattest by Dr. Edward A. Wilson, a member of the British National Antarctic Expedition of 1901-4, the average was 70.5lb (32kg), but heavier specimens have been reported.

One emperor penguin captured in the Ross Sea by another British Antarctic expedition in November, 1915, tipped the scales at 94lb (42.6kg) and boasted a chest measurement of 52 inches (132cm), and this probably constitutes a weight record for this species.

Emperor penguins have tremendous strength and vitality ... five men from a Scottish whaling ship [once] tried to pin

an emperor penguin down on the ice without harming it, but they were quite unequal to the task and were bowled over like ninepins. They eventually managed to strap two leather belts around the lusty bird's body, but as they stood back to take a breath, so did the penguin--and burst the belts! The 74lb (33.6kg) powerhouse was finally secured with a rope, but when he was hoisted on board it still managed to knock the ship's dog out cold with a blow from its muscular flipper.

The emperor penguin is also the deepest diving bird in the world. In 1969, a team of American scientists carried out a series of experiments at Cape Crozier to determine the diving ability of this species. All the birds used for the experimental dives were collected from groups gathered at the edge of the ice and then taken to the diving station--an isolated hole in the ice to

which the penguins were forced to return after each feeding dive. Depth measurements were obtained with small 16oz (4.5g) capillary depth-recorders sutured to the backs of the birds' necks.

A total of 238 dives were measured during the experimental studies, and the greatest depth recorded in a vertical plunge was 869 feet (265m)--by a small group of 10 penguins. The duration of most of the dives was less than 1 minute, but one bird...was seen swimming near the observation chamber... after 18 minutes' submersion. The birds were never seen to exhale under water, and diving was usually preceded by a few rapid breaths and then a deep inhalation.

Abstracted from:

The Guinness Book of Animal Facts and Feats, by Gerald L. Wood, Guinness Superlatives, Enfield, U.K. (3rd ed.), 1982.

Field Medical Advisor: Michael J. Manyak, M.D., Department of Urology, George Washington University Medical Center, 2150 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

Honorary Members: Andre Capart (Belgium); Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer (South Africa); John Green (Canada); The Lord Hunt of Llanfair Waterdine (U.K.); Marie-Jeanne Koffmann (U.S.S.R.); Ingo Krumbiegel (Germany); Theodore Monod (France); Robert Titmus (Canada).

Benefactors: G.A. Buder, III (U.S.A.); Robert C. Dorion (Guatemala); Michael T. Martin (U.S.A.); Gale J. Raymond (U.S.A.); Hugh H. Trotti, Jr. (U.S.A.); Kurt Von Nieda (U.S.A.); Edward B. Winn (Switzerland); Bette Wolfskill (U.S.A.); Count F.C. Zedlitz (Argentina).

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